

Thursday, December 04, 2008

From the Coeur d'Alene Press

- No new education news stories posted online today.

From the Spokesman-Review

- No new education news stories posted online today.

From the Moscow Pullman Daily News (password required)

- UI faculty want to protect tenured jobs
- Washington, Idaho receive 'F's for college affordability
- Proposed housing, dining rate increases topic of presentation

From the Lewiston Tribune (password required)

- Pomeroy makes room for alternative school
- ISU seeks 'green light' on medical degree program
- Idaho universities ditch fee hike plan

From the Idaho-Press Tribune, Nampa

- Idaho universities ditch fee hike plan
- Local schools restrict spending

From the Idaho Statesman

- No new education news stories posted online today.

From the Twin Falls Times-News

- CSI officials trying to keep tuition rates down

From the Idaho State Journal (password Required)

- Medical school plan on track
- ISU official concerned about faculty retention in face of cuts

From the Idaho Falls Post Register (password required)

- Tuition hike plan ditched
- Lawmaker: Pay parents to teach kindergartners

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FROM THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW

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FROM THE MOSCOW PULLMAN DAILY NEWS (PASSWORD REQUIRED)

UI faculty want to protect tenured jobs

Steven Daley-Laursen: 'Nothing is off the table'
By Halley Griffin, Daily News staff writer

Posted on: Wednesday, December 03, 2008

University of Idaho Faculty Council members want the possibility of tenured faculty layoffs taken off the table.

Vice chairman Jack Miller said eliminating that option would make the university's program cuts less stressful and more successful.

"If it's on the table, this might turn into a war. If not, it might turn into a skirmish," Miller said at Tuesday's council meeting.

UI President Steven Daley-Laursen has repeatedly said "nothing is off the table" since announcing a massive program shake-up in September, and the university is expected to cut many of its less-productive programs.

Daley-Laursen reiterated that message two weeks ago at a university faculty meeting when asked if he'd consider laying off faculty.

"I know the president has been pretty adamant about saying 'Everything's on the table,' " Miller said. "But I don't think it'll go."

In ordinary circumstances tenured faculty would not be worried about their jobs. The definition of a tenured position is one held for life, so tenured faculty members normally would be immune to layoffs.

That may not be the case if the programs or departments in which they work are eliminated, and that's what concerns university faculty.

Faculty want to know what, specifically, is on the table.

Faculty council member Jerry Fairley said he's bothered by the fact that the "program prioritization process" seems to be less open than faculty had expected.

"It does seem ... that we've lost quite a bit of the transparency that we'd originally discussed," Fairley said. "We don't know which these programs are ... and yet we don't see any of (the process)."

The UI Provost's Council, made up of deans and vice presidents, met last month to try to divide programs into three categories, ranging from most important and productive to least.

UI Provost Doug Baker said there was a blind vote on program priorities, and it quickly became clear during a subsequent discussion that ranking all of the university's 215 programs would be a much more complex process.

College deans are using a set of program review criteria that includes productivity, quality, external demand, internal demand, impact, centrality and cost-effectiveness.

How each criteria is met is determined using figures that include the amount of work published by a particular program or the number of graduates per program divided by the number of full-time budgeted faculty.

Faculty council member Don Crowley said he's unsure about the ability to measure certain criteria, such as productivity and quality.

"No one's prone to argue these points until you know how they spin out," Crowley said. "In the abstract, I can find all sorts of things wrong with these measures. ... Are these measures really measuring anything at all?"

Baker said he plans to post an analysis of programs based on the review criteria to his Web site by the end of the week. This information will not include the results of the deans' initial vote on program priority, a fact that bothered Fairley.

"The deans were reticent to do that because they took an initial straw vote," Baker said. "It's like voting at a caucus before you've heard the candidates."

Fairley and faculty council chairwoman Karen Guilfoyle said people whose programs were initially given low priority might be more inspired to act if they knew cuts were a possibility.

"If you knew your program was being considered you might think a lot more creatively about ways to restructure," Guilfoyle said.

Baker said he expects to have a preliminary sketch of which programs might be cut after a provost's council meeting in mid-January. The faculty council will discuss the initial report at its Jan. 20 meeting.

On the Web:

www.uidaho.edu/provost

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Washington, Idaho receive 'F's for college affordability

Staff and wire reports

Posted on: Wednesday, December 03, 2008

An independent report on American higher education flunked the states of Washington and Idaho on college affordability, but says Washington is doing a commendable job at helping students earn degrees once they start taking college classes.

Idaho received an average grade in the "Completion" category.

The biennial study by the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, which evaluates how well higher education is serving the public, gave "F"s for affordability to 49 states. Only California earned a passing grade, a "C," in the category, because it has relatively inexpensive community colleges.

The affordability grade is based on how much of an average family's income it costs to go to college. The report said poor and working-class families in Washington must spend 36 percent of their income, in addition to financial aid, to pay for tuition at a two-year college.

Families in the same categories in Idaho must spend 34 percent of their income, in addition to financial aid, to pay for costs at public four-year colleges.

One positive note on Washington's affordability index is financial aid. The report says Washington gives more financial aid to low-income students than other states and has increased its student aid substantially since the early 1990s.

Idaho, on the other hand, spends only 5 cents for every dollar in Pell Grant aid to low-income students.

College affordability is likely to worsen as the economy does, said Patrick Callan, president of the Center for Public Policy and Higher Education.

College presidents in both states have expressed concern that higher education could be hit hard as state lawmakers deal with expected budget deficits.

Idaho Gov. C.L. "Butch" Otter ordered another budget cut to state agencies this month, stripping the University of Idaho of another \$3 million, and higher education as a whole of nearly \$8.3 million. The UI already cut almost \$1 million from its budget in September, and other Idaho colleges and universities cut \$2.8 million.

The national study gave Washington a "B" for the proportion of residents who have a bachelor's degree, and a "D" for not providing enough opportunities for young and working-age adults to go to college.

Only a small proportion of Idaho residents have a bachelor's degree, which weakens the state's economy, according to the study.

"Idaho's fairly low performance in educating its young population could limit the state's access to a competitive work force and weaken its economy," the study stated.

Participation grades for Washington and Idaho were worse than many other states - half the states earned "A"s or "B"s in this category.

Washington's "A-minus" for awarding certificates and degrees reflects the fact that 63 percent of college students complete a bachelor's degree within six years. However, 51 percent of Hispanics graduate within six years, compared to 65 percent of whites.

Idaho's grade was average in the same category. Only 43 percent of college students complete a bachelor's degree within six years. Thirty-one percent of Hispanics in Idaho graduate within six years, compared with 45 percent of whites.

Both states got passing grades in the area of college preparation. The report stated, however, that a small proportion of Washington high school students score well on Advanced Placement tests and college entrance exams. It noted that only 66 percent of Washington Hispanics have a high school diploma compared to 91 percent of whites.

In Idaho, 73 percent of Hispanics have a high school credential, compared with 91 percent of whites.

Proposed housing, dining rate increases topic of presentation

Staff report

Posted on: Wednesday, December 03, 2008

UNIVERSITY OF IDAHO

Proposed housing, dining rate increases topic of presentation

All University of Idaho residence hall residents are invited to attend a presentation on proposed housing and dining rate increases for 2009-10.

The presentation is scheduled for 6 p.m. Thursday in the Living Learning Community White Pine multipurpose room.

Students will have the opportunity to question University Housing and University Dining directors as well as representatives from each department.

If student feedback is positive Thursday evening, the departments will present the proposed rate increases to university leaders. The increases will then be considered by the Idaho State Board of Education at its April meeting.

FROM THE LEWISTON TRIBUNE (PASSWORD REQUIRED)

Pomeroy makes room for alternative school

Program designed for high school-level students 'who would do better in a different learning environment'

By Kerri Sandaine

Thursday, December 4, 2008

Pomeroy School District Superintendent Kim Spacek looks over Pomeroy High School's new alternative high school classroom. The classroom was created from the former boiler room of the elementary school and will be in use next month. The control panel for the old boilers has been left in place on the back wall as a historical artifact.

POMEROY - An old boiler room at Pomeroy Elementary School has been transformed into the future home of an alternative high school.

Classes could begin by the end of next month, Superintendent Kim Spacek said.

"Except for the heating and cooling, the room is ready to go," he said. "Right now we're trying to identify kids who are struggling at the senior high level, who would do better in a different learning environment."

Several Garfield County kids who may be interested in the program are being home schooled or attending the alternative high school in Clarkston, Spacek said.

Linda K. McKeirnan, a grant coordinator, said the remodeled room can be used for an after-school program in the afternoons, a community adult learning center in the evenings and alternative high school during the day.

State cuts in K-12 education are not expected to affect the programs, McKeirnan said, and it won't cost the district any money to run the alternative school because the additional students will generate funding.

"We will be bringing in kids who fell through the cracks and may not be attending school at all," she said.

The alternative-school area has its own door, so the older students won't be using the same entrance as the elementary students. The space has been used as a technology room and is equipped with computers and a large printer and laminator for community projects.

The renovations were paid for with \$30,000 from Inland Northwest Community Foundation, \$21,000 from the Asotin-Garfield Community Network, \$70,000 from the 21st Century Community Learning Center Grant, \$9,000 from Division of Alcohol and Substance Abuse - Community Mobilization Against Substance Abuse, and \$13,500 from the Shepherd Foundation.

"In the beginning, the idea was to have the project totally done without taxpayers having to fund it, and with the recent Shepherd Foundation donation, we've been able to do that," McKeirnan said. "A lot of people have worked really hard on this."

The construction project also became a learning experience for several students, who worked with architect Rich Cardwell, a Pomeroy graduate who now works in the Seattle area.

"He met with four high school boys and picked one of their plans," McKeirnan said. "The kids worked with the architect on design and also helped with construction. It was a wonderful experience for the boys."

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ISU seeks 'green light' on medical degree program

Associated Press

Thursday, December 4, 2008

BOISE - Idaho State University President Arthur Vailas says his plan to create a medical degree program will go before the state Board of Education next year and if it passes, could accept students as soon as 2012.

Vailas is plowing ahead with ambitious plans to offer Idaho's first medical degree program, despite an order by Gov. C.L. (Butch) Otter this week to cut another 3 percent from state budgets already whittled down by 1 percent in September.

"At some point, somebody has to give us the green light," Vailas told The Associated Press on Wednesday.

Idaho is among a handful of states without a medical school. In January, the state Board of Education is expected to consider a detailed proposal to create a medical degree program on the Pocatello campus.

The program would require \$21 million in startup money, which the university plans to cover with a loan, and would plan to enroll 60 medical students each year beginning as soon as 2012, Vailas said.

"We're not asking the state for money," he said.

Under the Idaho State plan, the school would train medical students through existing health science courses during their first two years. Students would spend their last two years at clinical sites in Idaho for hands-on training.

The state now sends medical students to train as doctors in Seattle through a cooperative program.

Idaho universities ditch fee hike plan

Officials agree to pull the request to state board

Associated Press

Thursday, December 4, 2008

BOISE - The presidents of Idaho's three public universities no longer plan to seek a rule change from the state Board of Education that would allow them to propose student fee increases of more than 10 percent next year.

The schools have agreed to remove the request from a list of items the board will consider at a meeting today in Nampa, Boise State University President Bob Kustra said.

Board policy prohibits

Idaho public universities and colleges from requesting state approval to increase tuition for full-time students by more than 10 percent.

Financial managers for the three state universities, as well as Lewis-Clark State College and Eastern Idaho Technical College, made the initial request that would have allowed the schools to request higher increases in student fees, board spokesman Mark Browning said.

School administrators said the additional money would have helped offset ongoing state budget cuts.

Gov. C.L. (Butch) Otter told state agencies on Monday to cut 3 percent in spending due to lagging state tax revenue, following a 1 percent holdback he ordered in September.

Idaho colleges and universities will lose \$11 million under the total 4 percent reduction in state spending.

Without additional revenues to make up for the shortfall, school administrators say they may have to put new programs on hold, eliminate some classes and postpone hiring faculty.

Mike Rush, executive director of the state Board of Education, said the proposal for student fee increases of more than 10 percent would have posed significant financial roadblocks for the unemployed workers who are going back to school.

"This is a very, very difficult time for people," Rush said. "They are going to have a hard time paying the money."

While he agreed with the decision to yank the student fee request, Rush said it was only meant to be discussed.

"I don't think there was ever a proposal to raise fees or even a serious request to raise fees beyond 10 percent," he said.

FROM THE IDAHO-PRESS TRIBUNE, NAMPA

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Local schools restrict spending

Idaho Press-Tribune Staff

newsroom@idahopress.com Updated 9 hours 19 minutes ago NAMPA — The Nampa School District has directed its schools and support staff to reduce discretionary spending by 5 percent in response to state budget holdbacks — and other local districts have restricted expenses as well.

Although the state plans to exempt schools from the current round of holdbacks, Nampa district officials wanted to be prepared to respond to future reductions.

"In light of the holdbacks and the state's and nation's economic situation, we need to take proactive measures to identify areas where we can reduce expenditures," Joshua Jensen, chief financial officer, said Wednesday. "We greatly appreciate state leaders' efforts to exempt schools from deep cuts during the school year."

Much of the district's budget from the state is already obligated to pay for salaries, benefits and busing. Officials said the 5 percent self-imposed holdback is aimed at discretionary costs that will reduce spending on items such as supplies, travel, and other one-time expenses.

The Vallivue School District will try to hold back 1 percent of the working budget for the coming semester, Assistant Superintendent Pat Charlton said.

The effort shouldn't have a noticeable affect on operations, he said. The district will attempt to save by avoiding any unanticipated expenses, such as new hires, and leaving contingency funds untapped.

"I think everyone is concerned about the following year, however," he said. "Everyone is going to be watching what the Legislature is going to do."

Caldwell School District spokeswoman Jennifer Swindell said the district has not set a concrete target for cuts but is looking at any way it can reduce spending.

"We're going to be very strict with overtime and travel, but we haven't put a number on anything," she said. "I would say our first step is to make overtime rare. We're definitely looking for efficiency."

FROM THE IDAHO STATESMAN

No new education news stories posted online today.

FROM THE TWIN FALLS TIMES-NEWS

CSI officials trying to keep tuition rates down

Increases loom after governor orders holdbacks

By Ben Botkin

Times-News writer

For Idaho college and university administrators, the coming months spent planning next fall's tuition rates will be under a cloud of state budget woes.

Higher education officials throughout Idaho agree that tuition increases are possible. They also say it's too soon to know how much tuition might go up. For now, this much is known: 10 percent is the limit.

By state law, the College of Southern Idaho cannot increase its tuition beyond 10 percent each year. The state's other colleges and universities cannot, either.

Jerry Beck, president of CSI, stressed that the college doesn't want students to shoulder the burden of budget cuts. He said he wants CSI's tuition for next year to either remain unchanged or increase only slightly instead of the maximum.

The specifics still need to be worked out as the college looks at its budget.

"It's way too early at this point for us to project what we will be looking for from a student tuition and fee area," Beck said. "We will be very sensitive to the affordability and access issue for students."

Beck said that the best way for the college to weather the crisis is to recruit and retain students who come back for a second year of education.

"What we don't see is that the sky is falling," Beck said. "What we see is we have to take a very critical look at all aspects of our revenues as well as our expenditures."

College and university presidents decided at a Presidents Council meeting this week that they won't be asking the Idaho State Board of Education for permission to propose tuition increases above 10 percent. Under the current system, the three public universities, along with Lewis-Clark State College and Eastern Idaho Technical College, cannot ask the board to consider increases of more than 10 percent.

The 10 percent increase limit cannot be changed by the State Board.

The presidents' discussion came because the 10 percent limit surfaced on the agenda of today's State Board meeting. If the board were to lift the 10 percent limit, that would only allow institutions to ask for more than a 10 percent raise. State Board approval would still be needed for proposed tuition increases.

However, college and university presidents weren't expecting the issue to come up.

"The presidents weren't really aware that was going to be on the agenda," Beck said. "They unanimously voted that they would not be seeking tuition increases above a 10 percent level."

No universities are claiming the agenda item as their own.

Beck, head of the Presidents Council, will ask the board to remove the item.

The agenda item originated from university and college vice presidents of finance, who meet as a group and have talked about potential ways to deal with the budget challenges, said Mark Browning, spokesman for the State Board of Education.

However, they didn't intend for it to be an agenda item, though, said Lloyd Mues, vice president for finance and administration for the University of Idaho.

"The thing did become an agenda item after the discussion, but it was not submitted by any university," he said, adding that he wanted to focus on productive discussions, not finger-pointing.

"You'll probably see that all the colleges and universities will come in with some sort of request for some sort of increase," Mues said. "It's way too early for anyone to even say, 'This is the number.'"

Graham Garner, spokesman for Idaho State University, echoed that theme.

"We don't know yet exactly what level we might be suggesting or requesting," he said.

Frank Zang, spokesman for Boise State University, said a tuition increase of less than 10 percent is workable.

"I think that the general sense is that we will have to increase tuition, but we certainly can do it more reasonably than a request to go over 10 percent," Zang said.

Ben Botkin may be reached at 208-735-3238 or bbotkin@magicvalley.com.

FROM THE IDAHO STATE JOURNAL (PASSWORD REQUIRED)

Medical school plan on track

Budget holdbacks won't derail effort, ISU president says

BY YANN RANAIVO
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POCATELLO — Idaho State University President Arthur Vailas said recent budget holdbacks do not affect his university's plan to propose a medical education program in Idaho.

Vailas fielded one question about the matter during an open forum meeting with faculty Monday and said ISU's proposed distributive medical education model will largely rely on a mixture of tuition dollars, grants, investments from private industry and philanthropy to operate.

ISU, which is seeking approval from the State Board of Education to further develop its model's business plan, estimates initial start-up costs of \$11.2 million for its medical education

program. The university also estimates annual operating costs of \$11.2 million after the program reaches full capacity. ISU has pitched a plan to enroll 60 medical students a year for a total of 240 by the program's fourth year.

According to estimates that were presented to state officials last month, ISU drew out a plan to cover all of its medical program's annual operating expenses with student tuition, which is rated at \$46,950. However, the university intends to seek \$6.4 million from the Legislature to reduce the tuition costs to \$20,000.

"In our budget model discussions, we have a model where we don't have to ask the Legislature for money," Vailas said. "I don't see any delays, and there's no need for any."

Discussions about ISU suspending its plan to develop a medical education program arose after Gov. C.L. "Butch" Otter ordered most state agencies to initiate 3 percent spending cuts in addition to the 1 percent holdbacks that the governor announced in September.

ISU's holdbacks were taken out of a \$77.3 million state-appropriated general funds budget.

ISU official concerned about faculty retention in face of cuts

BY JOHN O'CONNELL
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POCATELLO — The chairman of Idaho State University's Faculty Senate fears recently announced state budget holdbacks could spur faculty flight at an institution that has already fallen behind in its salaries.

Faculty Senate Chairman David Delehanty, an associate professor of biology, noted ISU faculty members are paid 85 percent on average of what their colleagues make at other state universities. Furthermore, he cited an American Association of University Professors survey of 2007 salaries that ranked ISU at 318 of 319 American Ph.D. granting universities. Delehanty argues the university's administration is doing everything possible to make the best of a bad situation, but he warns the Legislature not to cut higher education as the nation heads into recession.

"This financial situation is very serious, and because of circumstances that were beyond the control of our current administration and beyond the control of faculty, ISU is going into this situation already stretched," Delehanty said. "We are like somebody who is already very thin facing famine. It's much different than universities that were somewhat fat going into famine."

Gov. C.L. "Butch" Otter recently ordered state agencies to cut 4 percent from their budgets and hold an additional 2 percent in reserve accounts. For ISU, taking 6 percent from its annual budget translates into a \$4.4 million spending withholding.

"Retention is an issue, but the fundamental problem on campus is that the resources necessary to maintain and improve ISU are not being provided," Delehanty said. "The faculty has carried this university on their backs for more than 10 years waiting for equity and compensation that hasn't arrived."

Barbara Adamcik, associate provost of academic affairs, said ISU's faculty turnover rate is "certainly within the normal range of any institution."

By the end of the 2007-2009 school year, 34 of 617 faculty members had voluntarily resigned. Another 15 retired, she said. That equates to a 5.5 percent voluntary turnover rate for the year.

“We’re discussing multiple ways of finding money for the holdback and putting it in reserve. We’re trying to hold down spending and looking for places where we can be more efficient,” Adamcik said. “The Faculty Senate chair, he takes the pulse of the faculty in a nonsystematic way. If you are facing a 6 percent budget cut, you expect people to be rattled by that.”

In times of recession, Delehanty noted enrollment in higher education typically increases. He believes ISU has the best college faculty in the state, and he said most faculty members turn down repeated job offers at higher pay because they love what they do. He doubts that trend will continue if the state’s investment in higher education moves in the wrong direction.

“I presume people’s motivation to leave will only go up,” Delehanty said. “The financial issues facing the state are very, very real. The faculty appreciates that.

“The answer to Idaho’s economic problems lies in education. Cuts to education should be minimal right now. This is actually an opportunity for Idaho. By investing in education right now to catch up to other Western states contributes to the economic security of the state.”

FROM THE IDAHO FALLS POST REGISTER (PASSWORD REQUIRED)

Tuition hike plan ditched

BOISE (AP) -- Idaho public universities no longer plan to seek a rule change from the State Board of Education that would allow for student fee increases of over 10 percent.

Boise State University president Bob Kustra said the schools have agreed to remove the request from the list of items the board will consider at a meeting this week in Nampa.

Board policy prohibits universities from requesting tuition increases for full-time students of more than 10 percent.

The state's three public universities, as well as Lewis-Clark State College and Eastern Idaho Technical College, made the initial request for permission to propose higher increases in student fees.

Lawmaker: Pay parents to teach kindergartners

TWIN FALLS (AP) -- A southwestern Idaho lawmaker who was scolded by his own Republican leaders earlier this year for overstepping his mandate on an interim committee pushing family values now wants to pay parents to teach their own kindergarten-age children at home.

Rep. Steve Thayn, an Emmett Republican and House Education Committee member, aims to save Idaho money by removing the young students from regular classrooms and promoting parental involvement.

The measure, which Thayne has vowed to introduce in the 2009 Legislature, would divide the average \$4,500 per-student annual cost of kindergarten, with half the cash going to parents, a quarter going to school districts and a quarter to a fund that shores up public education during tough economic times.

Parents would be eligible for the reimbursements after children passed a test showing they were ready for first grade.

After hearing Thayne's latest plan, minority Democratic lawmakers said it could open the door to potential cheating, with parents collecting a check from the state while depositing their children in day care.